

# Melrose COVID-19 Pandemic Experience Project

SUBMISSION 19 JUN 2021

WARD HAMILTON

Today is June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021, and we are 15 months in from when the pandemic started to affect our daily lives. I use Friday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020, as the reference point because that was the last day our youngest child, Seth, attended school in person. I am 49 years old, born at Melrose-Wakefield Hospital on February 8, 1972, and we live at 87 East Emerson Street in Melrose. I am a contractor (mason by trade) and currently chair the Melrose Historical Commission. The rest of the story can be gleaned from my obituary which I am guessing exists by the time anyone reads this.

We used caution but were not deterred by the pandemic. In truth, I don't know anyone who was hospitalized because of COVID nor do I know anyone who died because of it. In that regard we were very fortunate. The pandemic didn't hamper or adversely impact my business. We have worked steadily right through the whole thing and now find ourselves the busiest we've ever been. The media reports negatively on the economy and unemployment yet businesses are desperate to hire employees.

In many ways, things remained status quo. Everyone got used to seeing each other wear masks and I wonder if that's a trend that will continue. In April I received both doses of the Pfizer vaccine. Meanwhile, many others do not want to get it. I think the experience was toughest on people like my parents who, at 75, remained in the house as much as possible and didn't receive visitors. The holidays were tough but they were determined to remain healthy and enjoy many future holidays together with friends and family.

It was also particularly tough on kids. Our youngest daughter, Johanna, graduated from Melrose High School in 2020. They cancelled prom and many other senior activities. She kept a very good attitude about it. Although she received full scholarships to two other schools, she was adamant that she would go to the University of Vermont. I was against it, as this would cost me over \$40,000/year. Once her senior year was impacted by the pandemic I relented. She just completed her freshman year.

With the schools closed, the Melrose kids learned remotely from home. Our son, Seth, who turns twelve in a few weeks, just finished 5<sup>th</sup> grade at the Winthrop School yesterday. My wife, Andrea, spent the entire school year next to him helping keep focus and minimize distractions. As a result, he has thrived. Something tells me that his positive experience was rare. In the Fall, the plan is for him to attend Fusion Academy in Burlington.

Grace is 19 and just finished her junior year at Holy Cross. She wants to become a physician's assistant. Joe is 23, graduated from UMass-Dartmouth in Dec 2020, and just finished his first semester working on an MBA at Suffolk. Hannah is 26 and married Logan Connor in Aug 2019. She went to UNH Law and graduated in May 2020. She just passed the bar and works for a firm in York, Maine. She and Logan live on Sargent Street in Melrose. Tomorrow, on Father's Day, we are all going to dinner (including my parents) to celebrate all of these milestones that passed over the last 15 months.

As you read about the Coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic you will undoubtedly read about the hoarding that occurred during the Spring of 2020. I was one of those people in the early days, driving as far away as NH and Maine to buy up toilet paper and non-perishable goods. For better or worse, there it is. The following images are the only pictures I have in my camera with people wearing masks.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'WJH', with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the bottom of the signature.



This picture was taken in September of 2020 at the First Baptist Church of Boston (1010 Comm Ave). I was the project manager of the restoration from 2015 to 2020.



Johanna needed to have a colonoscopy in April 2021 so I traveled up to Vermont to be with her. She was subsequently diagnosed with ulcerative colitis.



This is the makeshift clinic in Chelsea, MA, where I received both vaccine doses in April 2021.



The high school football season was postponed in the Fall of 2020. In March of 2021, an abbreviated six game season took place. Here, the Melrose Red Raiders prepare to kickoff to the Woburn Tanners. Melrose won this game and went on to remain undefeated. In fact, they haven't lost a game since 2018. All of the kids playing here are kids I coached in middle school football, starting in 2015.



In late December of 2020 we went to North Conway for several days. Here is Grace skiing for one of the first times in her life.



Same timeframe, here is Seth tubing at Cranmore Mountain.



This is a new slate roof and copper gutters that my guys installed at the Kennedy Center, 23 Moulton St., Charlestown, MA. The job started late Aug 2020 and was done by the first week in November. Pictured are architect Shawn Willett (left) and KFC executive director Thara Fuller.





This is a "selfie" of me at Home Depot.



The finally put on a social-distant MHS class of 2020 graduation in late August, right before all the kids left for college.



Seth barely in the foreground, Johanna on the left, Grace on the right. In July of 2020 we stayed in Rockport for a few nights. Johanna is holding her mask.